



Going to Grandma's

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Friday: Mostly Sunny
High: 70 Low: 49
Saturday: Few Showers
High: 58 Low: 40
Sunday: Scattered Showers
High: 58 Low: 42
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DESERT

WARRIOR

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Feb. 24, 2011

Search for Marine continues

Cpl. Graham J. Benson
Desert Warrior Staff

As of Wednesday, a Yuma Marine who has been missing since Feb. 14 has not yet been found, while the investigation into his disappearance continues.



Sgt. Jonathan Kyle Ferguson

The search for Sgt. Jonathan Kyle Ferguson, a tactical air operations technician with Marine Aviation Control Squadron 1, expanded Feb. 18 to include approximately 80 MACS-1 Marines assisting local and federal law enforcement agencies in their hunt for clues in a northwest sector of Yuma.

Ferguson, a 22-year-old native of West Monroe, La., was last seen leaving the IHOP restaurant



Photo by Gunnery Sgt. Bill Lisbon

Marines from Marine Air Control Squadron 1 along with local law enforcement personnel review their efforts Friday at Joe Henry Park in a search for clues to the whereabouts of Sgt. Jonathan Kyle Ferguson, a MACS-1 Marine who has been missing since Feb. 14. More than 80 Marines joined Yuma County Sheriff's Office, Yuma Police Department, Naval Criminal Investigative Service and U.S. Border Patrol personnel to search northwest Yuma.

Yuma's Avengers embark on 13th MEU

Lance Cpl. Laura Cardoso
Desert Warrior Staff

Marine Attack Squadron 211 and Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 13 Marines embarked on the USS Boxer Tuesday morning from San Diego for a seven-month deployment with the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

Approximately 100 Marines and six AV-8B Harriers will be providing close-air support for the MEU's infantry units as well as reconnaissance capabilities throughout the MEU's diverse variety of missions.

"Our mission out there is to provide support to the 13th MEU in any way they need," said Capt. Colin Newbold, VMA-211 pilot. "I'm confident

see AVENGERS page 8



Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Trevor Welsh

Marines aboard the USS Boxer man the rails in the hangar bay of the ship Tuesday. Approximately half of the Marine Attack Squadron 211 joined the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit aboard the USS Boxer Monday. The MEU is underway for a scheduled deployment to the western Pacific region. The other half of the Wake Island Avengers are currently deployed with the 31st MEU and participating in exercise Cobra Gold 2011, an annual multinational exercise between the U.S. and Thailand.

NMCRS kicks off fund drive

Lance Cpl. Laura Cardoso
Desert Warrior Staff

The station's Navy/Marine Corps Relief Society is scheduled to hold their annual active duty fund drive March 1-31.

The society, a private, non-profit organization established in 1904, provides various forms of financial assistance to Marines and sailors in need through funds donated by fellow active duty Marines and sailors, as well as retirees.

"It's the responsibility of the active duty community to raise money for their fellow Marines and sailors," said Lora O'Hara, NMCRS director. "This is how you can take care of your own."

Donations go to Yuma's NMCRS chapter, which provides military members, their families, and widows with funds in cases of emergency, quick assist loans up to \$300, a visiting nurse program, baby workshop budgets, budget counseling, financial education and thrift shops.

The society is able to keep its costs low through an almost entirely volunteer work force, ensuring that the maximum amount of donated funds reach those in need.

"We need to be able to fund the services that volunteers run," said O'Hara. "Volunteers are the backbone of the society and are needed to operate the programs we offer here."

Once the drive begins, each unit's fund drive representative is in charge of how they wish to acquire donations.

Donations can be made through cash, check or allotment.

Last year there were 1,283 NMCRS assistance cases on station, with \$445,885 in total financial assistance. \$10,320 of the assistance was in grants, which are not repaid, and \$435,262 was in loans, \$5,456 of which weren't repaid because the society determined that the loan recipients were financially unable to do so.

However, only \$46,294 was raised through the fund

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Vote to nix extra JSF engine welcomed

Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates welcomed the full House of Representatives Feb. 16 vote to kill the extra engine for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

The House voted 233-199 to strip funds for the engine from the fiscal 2011 defense spending bill.

"Secretary Gates welcomes today's vote and is gratified that the full House has recognized the merits of the department's position in opposing the JSF extra engine," said Pentagon Press Secretary Geoff Morrell. "He understands this afternoon's vote is but one step,

although a very important one, on the path to ensuring that we stop spending limited dollars on unwanted and unneeded defense programs."

The bill still must go to the Senate, where funding for the engine could be added back.

General Electric and Rolls Royce are currently building the engine. In 2005, then-President George W. Bush and then-Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld opposed the extra engine. In a statement issued May 28, President Barack Obama promised to veto any legislation that provided funds for the extra engine.

Gates has said he will use every legal means to terminate the extra engine program, which he said is costing taxpayers \$28 million a month.

Camo couple



Photo by Lance Cpl. Laura Cardoso

Sgt. Jonathan Bonilla, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron avionics technician, applies camouflage paint to his wife Stephanie while on the station's rifle range Feb. 17 during the squadron's Jane Wayne Day. "I invited my wife out here so she could experience something new and exciting," said Bonilla. "Having her out here shooting our rifles and getting into cammies brings out her inner warrior." The 27 spouses that attended the event fired at the rifle range, ran a portion of the obstacle course and got a better understanding of a Marine's life.

Silent Drill Platoon welcomes ‘New Dog’

Lance Cpl. Laura Cardoso
Desert Warrior Staff

Discipline, precision and dedication to Corps and country are attributes found in all members of the Silent Drill Platoon.

Lance Cpl. Steven Akarim, infantryman and now one of the newest member of the SDP, has given blood, sweat and tears during countless hours of training in order to become a member of one of the most prestigious drill platoons in the world.

“It is a tremendous accomplishment,” said Akarim. “A lot of people don’t know the amount of work put into this, so it’s hard to understand how it feels when you actually make it into the platoon.”

Akarim, a 25-year-old native of Los Angeles, Calif., finished first in his class here on Feb. 15, earning him the title of “New Dog.”

“He’s excelled above the rest,” said Lance Cpl. Wesley Johnson, SDP member and Akarim’s team leader. “He helped other students through hard times. He is very knowledgeable and has a leadership quality to him, which alone makes him a great attribute to the platoon.”

Akarim arrived at the Marine Barracks Washington in D.C., the home of the SDP, in November 2009, missing his chance to attend Silent Drill School because the class had already started. Thus, he started ceremonial drill school and became a ceremonial marcher, which handle hundreds of ceremonial commitments throughout the nation’s capital region each year including Marine funerals at Arlington National Cemetery, sunset parades held at the Marine Corps War Memorial and evening parades at Marine Barracks Washington.

Akarim, also had the privilege of participating

in the Firing Party, which perform the iconic rifle salute at military burials. He was also part of the Dover Team, which receives the bodies of those killed in action when they are brought back to the states.

“It was a tremendous honor to be able to receive our fallen brothers,” said Akarim. “The Dover Team and Firing Party are very humbling experiences that I was very fortunate to have had the privilege of doing.”

After serving his time as a ceremonial marcher, Akarim then had the opportunity to attend Silent Drill School, a grueling, four-month-long school that teaches Marines a form of drill known as slide drill.

Slide drill uses no verbal commands and modifies common drill maneuvers, such as port arms, to best fit the platoon’s style and varying formations.

“This school instills a lot of discipline,” said Akarim. “It gave me self confidence and it reminded me of why I joined, who I am and what I’m capable of doing.”

The last month of training is held in Yuma, at which time the final cuts are made in order to determine the final members.

This day, known as challenge day, is held at a time and place unknown to anyone but the drill master. It is the day the students put forth all they have learned throughout their schooling and compete for a spot during a thorough performance evaluation that tests their abilities to perform the several techniques unique to the SDP.

This year, challenge day was held Feb. 15.

“No one knows when challenge day is,” said Akarim. “So when they announced it Tuesday it was a total shock, but I was ready and excited to show what I have learned. I was confident that with all the training I received from my instructors

I would succeed, and I did.”

After completing challenge day, the six newest members received their first pair of white leather gloves, symbolizing their membership in the SDP. Marines wore cotton gloves during training, which offer little protection and are meant to help teach the students to execute their drill movements to perfection, since they offer a better feel of the rifle.

“The day I received those gloves I had an overwhelming sense of pride,” said Akarim. “It was like receiving my eagle, globe and anchor all over again.”

Throughout his training Akarim faced several hurdles.

“Every single move we learned throughout training was a struggle,” said Akarim. “Learning the discipline was strenuous in itself. It breaks your body and you have to be able to keep pushing through that every single day. We took the vow of discipline. It is the fundamental tool that makes Marines.”

Although he faced struggles every day, Akarim did not let that stop him.

“What kept me going was the thought of my family and wife,” he added. “And knowing that my Marine to the left and right of me are going through the same pain. I did it for them. I held my rifle up higher to motivate them.”

Akarim made it to what is known as, The Marching 24, meaning he is part of the two dozen active members of the SDP who perform across the globe.

The SDP is scheduled to perform at 10:30 a.m. March 3 on the parade field and later that evening at 7 p.m. at Kofa High School. They will also perform at 7 p.m. on March 4 at the Veterans Memorial Stadium near Gila Ridge High School and Arizona Western College.



Photo by Lance Cpl. Laura Cardoso

Lance Cpl. Steven Akarim, infantryman and one of the six newest members of the Silent Drill Platoon, takes a break from a long practice session on a station baseball field Tuesday. For countless years, the SDP has been the world’s representation of Marines personifying the discipline and precision of the Corps through their performances around the globe. Akarim became a member of this prestigious group Feb. 15, their challenge day, which determines whether or not the students are ready to become a part of the SDP. Akarim finished at the top of his class, earning him the title of “New Dog,” a nickname given by the SDP to the most prominent student.

DESERT WARRIOR

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Going to Grandma’s: Mess hall matriarch Yuma icon

Lance Cpl. Jakob Schulz
Desert Warrior Staff

Marines visiting the mess hall see her every day, always smiling, always laughing, always supplying a kind word in an exotic accent and always offering up sage advice if asked. Who is she? Who is this woman many of us know only as “Grandma?”

Wandee Tolley, 70, Sodexo employee, is a kind woman to say the least, having raised seven children, three boys and four girls, and being married to the same retired Marine master sergeant for 41 years.

After her husband retired in 1989, Tolley continued to work at the enlisted club here as a bartender before eventually moving to the station’s mess hall in 2000.

“She’s a great employee,” said Alfred Schutt, Sodexo manager. “She does a great job of greeting the Marines, making them laugh and berating them if they don’t have their meal cards. She berates them in a fun way though so it’s OK.”

“I like working around the Marines,” said Tolley. “They are nice and interesting, and I like talking to them. I see all the kinds, all different types of people, from everywhere.”

Until the day Tolley decides to stop working at the mess hall, which doesn’t seem to be anytime soon, the Marines will know “Grandma.”

The moniker began, Tolley says, after Schutt put “Grandma” on Tolley’s nametag as a joke referencing her advanced age compared to her fellow mess hall employees.

“I wore the nametag and everybody started calling me Grandma,” said Tolley. “Mr. Schutt thought I might get mad, but I’m not. I know I’m old. I’m not ashamed when Marines call me it. I like it.”

The Marines she greets on a daily basis like it too, greeting her with the term of endearment whenever they come in.

“Grandma? Yeah, I love Grandma. She’s always here with a smile and a joke,” said Lance Cpl. Charles Eichler, station weather equipment maintainer.

As her still strong accent implies, Tolley didn’t begin her life in Yuma.

“I came from Thailand,” said Tolley as she looked into the distance, recalling a time of her life that must seem so foreign now. “I met him, my husband, there. He was funny, handsome and he said he loved

me; so I married him. He was there because of the (Vietnam) War.”

Tolley’s life changed forever, however, after her husband was assigned to Washington D.C.

Tolley only had a visa for herself, not for her six children at the time, and had to wait in Hong Kong before her husband could secure a flight and visas for her and the children to the states.

Then in early 1967 at 26 years old, Tolley and her children, boarded a military flight bound for San Luis Obispo, Calif.

“I didn’t want to go,” said Tolley. “But his family called and said, ‘come, come,’ and my father said, ‘he’s your husband, go, go.’ So I went, and the plane was so loud. We had earplugs, but I still had to cover my ears just to hear myself think.”

After arriving in the states, Tolley moved to Kansas City, Kan., where she and her husband bought their first house for \$16,000 and her first car for \$150.

“Everything is so expensive now,” said Tolley. “Before a whole car was \$150, now you can’t even buy a tire for that much.”

In 1983, after resisting moving to the desert for years, Tolley joined her husband for his final duty station in Yuma.

“He loves it here, says it is quiet, low crime and nice people,” said Tolley. “All I can think is ‘oh my God, it’s so hot here and everywhere I look there is only sand and nothing and desert. I don’t want to be here,’ but here is husband and here I am.”

She does, however, still hate the desert after 25 years.

Much like the Marines she watches over, Tolley’s children are also working and doing well. Her three sons live in California working jobs in security, neon sign installation and computers. Two of her daughters still live and work in Yuma. One works at the Sonoran Pueblo and the other at the Arizona Western College bookstore. The other two live with their husbands, one in London and the other in Washington, D.C.

“They are doing well,” said Tolley. “Once they finish high school, they go. It’s OK, they call or I call, they do well on their own.”

In addition to working at the mess hall and visiting her children from time to time, Tolley is a frequent traveler. Visiting her native Thailand every year and going to destinations across the world like Greece, Italy and Iceland.

“I work until I have enough money and then I

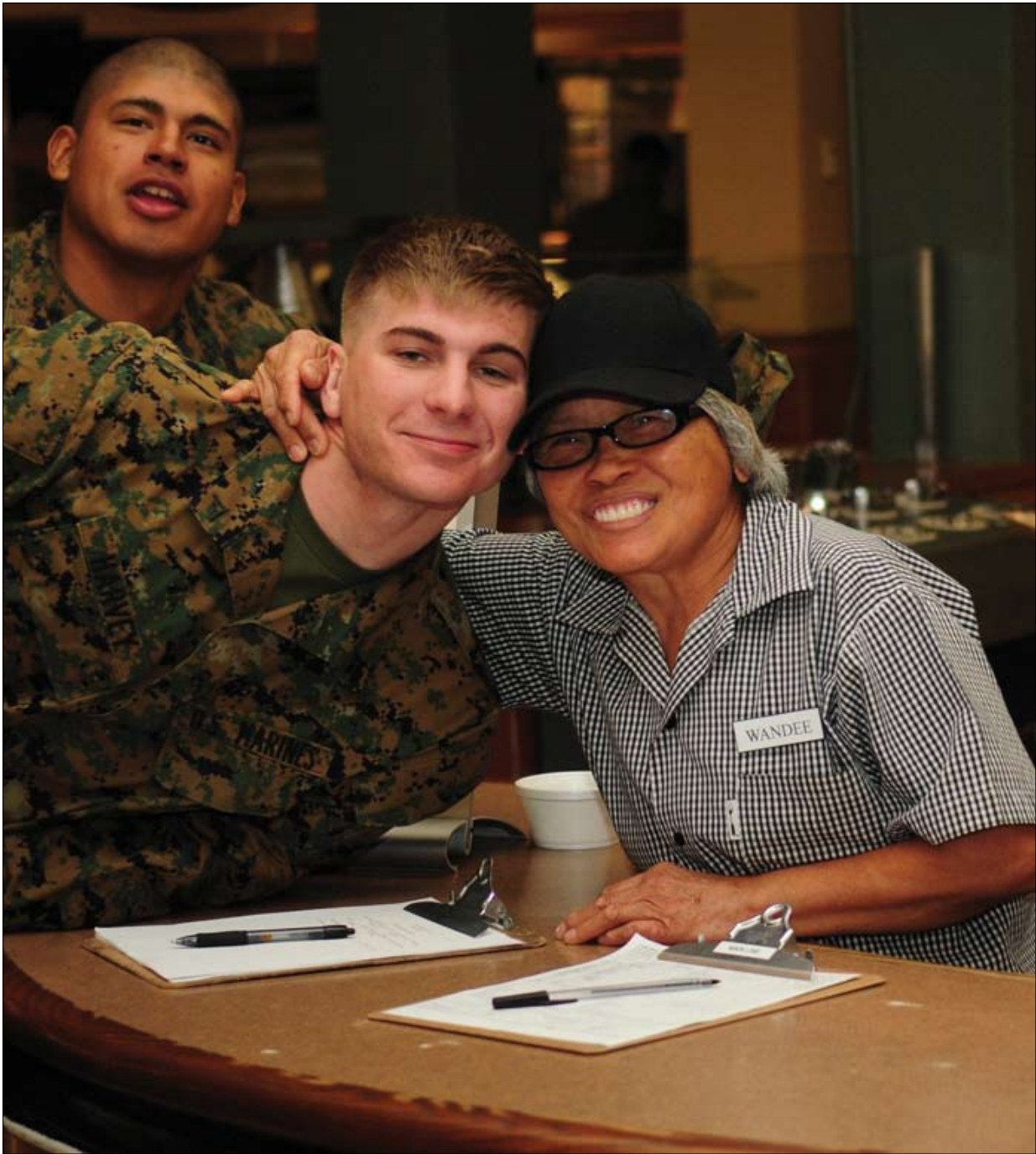


Photo by Lance Cpl. Jakob Schulz

Wandee Tolley, right, Sodexo employee, hugs one of the Marines coming into the station mess hall on Tuesday. Tolley is referred to by a majority of the Marines who frequent the mess hall as “Grandma,” as a term of endearment. Tolley was a native of Thailand before her husband relocated her and her six children to the states.

go,” said Tolley. “I go wherever I can, because, well, life’s too short to just stay in one place.”

On her trips Tolley normally travels alone because her husband prefers to stay home.

“He’s done enough traveling,” said Tolley. “All he wants to do now is sit home and watch TV. I’m not done though, I have more traveling in me.”

Tolley plans to continue working and doesn’t see herself retiring.

“I don’t want to retire,” said Tolley. “Then what would I do? I don’t want to sit at home doing nothing all day. But I do get tired quicker now, after I work two shifts all I want to do is go home and rest, maybe feed the birds.”

VMA-211

sLow down



Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Eva-Marie Ramsaran

A Marine Attack Squadron 211 AV-8B Harrier lands aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Essex in the Gulf of Thailand Feb. 13. Approximately half of the Wake Island Avengers are currently deployed with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit and participating in exercise Cobra Gold 2011, an annual multinational exercise between the U.S. and Thailand. The other half of the squadron joined the 13th MEU aboard the USS Boxer Monday.

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Thursday Little Fockers (PG-13) 7 p.m. | Friday Season of the Witch (PG-13) 6 p.m. | Saturday The Green Hornet (PG-13) 4 p.m. |
| Sunday Despicable Me (PG) 5 p.m. | True Grit (PG-13) 9 p.m. | The Dilemma (PG-13) 7 p.m. |
| Monday *Closed* | Tuesday *Closed* | Wednesday The Social Network (PG-13) 5 p.m. |

In Theaters

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MESS HALL MENU

HOURS OF OPERATION

Schedule

Breakfast: 5:30 - 7:30 a.m.
Lunch: 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Dinner: 4 - 6 p.m.
*Midrats: 11 p.m. to 12:45 a.m.
SubMarine Bar: 7 - 9 p.m.

Weekends

Brunch: 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Dinner: 3 - 5 p.m.

Fast Food Line (Mon. - Fri.)

Breakfast: 6:30 - 9:00 a.m.
Lunch: 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Dinner: 3:30 - 5:30 p.m. (closed Fridays)

Prices For military without meal cards

Breakfast: \$2.30
Lunch and dinner: \$4.25
Weekend brunch: \$4.85
Weekend dinner: \$5.95

Thu

LUNCH: Ginger Pot Roast
Turkey w/ Vegetables
Mashed Potatoes
Lyonnais Carrots
Succotash
Dinner Rolls

DINNER: BBQ Spareribs
Chicken Noodle Soup
Beef Stew
Buttered Egg Noodles
Confetti Rice
Southern-style Greens

Fri

LUNCH: Clam Chowder
Beef Yakisoba
Southern-fried Catfish
Baked Macaroni & Cheese
Simmered Corn
Green Beans w/ Mushrooms

DINNER: Swedish Meatballs
Rotisserie Chicken
Buttered Egg Noodles
Rissolo Potatoes
Cauliflower Combo
Black-eyed Peas

Sat

BRUNCH: Eggs
Hot & Cold Cereals
Breakfast Pizza
French Toast / Waffles
Grilled Chicken Sandwich
and more...

DINNER: Navy Bean Soup
Swiss Steak w/ Brown Gravy
Mexican Turkey Pasta
Roasted Pepper Potatoes
French-fried Cauliflower
Simmered Green Beans

Sun

BRUNCH: Eggs
Bakes Sausage Patties
Pasta Scrambler
Creamed Beef w/ Biscuits
Grilled Chicken Sandwich
and more...

DINNER: Roast Pork
Black Bean Veggie Chili
Baked Salmon Filet
Mashed Potatoes
Cilantro Rice
Simmered Carrots

Mon

LUNCH: Salisbury Steak
Chicken & Vegetable Pasta
Mashed Potatoes
Herbed Green Beans
Savory Summer Squash
Dinner Rolls

DINNER: Turkey Pot Pie
Chicken w/ Rice Soup
Dijon Pork Chop
Scalloped Potatoes
Steamed Rice
Club Spinach

Tue

LUNCH: Tomato Soup
Hungarian Goulash
w/ Noodles
Asian BBQ Turkey Roast
Rice Pilaf
Vegetable Stir Fry

DINNER: Chili Macaroni
Savory Baked Chicken
Grilled Cheese Sandwich
Lyonnais Potatoes
Simmered Peas
Carrots

Wed

LUNCH: BBQ Spareribs
Santa Fe Glazed Chicken
Long Grain & Wild Rice
Candied Sweet Potatoes
Southern-style Greens
Dinner Rolls

DINNER: Pepper Steak
Southwest Corn Chowder
Cheese Tortellini
w/ Marinara
Steamed Rice
California Vegetable Blend

ads

SEARCH ... from page 1

on 16th Street in Yuma in the early morning hours of Valentine’s Day, with Ferguson heading back to the station on foot around 3:30 a.m.

“I want Sgt. Ferguson’s parents in Louisiana to know that their son’s safety is our highest priority right now. Sgt. Ferguson is a part of our Marine Corps family and we are doing everything we can to help find him,” stated Lt. Col. Craig Doty, MACS-1 commanding officer.

Station Search and Rescue personnel have conducted several aerial searches of the area where Ferguson’s cell phone was last tracked, and Border Patrol agents have also conducted several canine searches of the area as well, to no avail.

Ferguson’s family is adamant that this is not a case of unauthorized absence.

“This is not in Kyle’s character,” Ferguson’s sister, Amy Diel, told a local Louisiana media outlet. “He has never just gone anywhere without anyone knowing about it.”

The MCAS Yuma NCIS team encourages anyone who may have information about Ferguson to call 928-269-2305.

Ferguson joined the Corps in 2007 and recently returned from a seven-month deployment to Afghanistan.



Photo by Gunnery Sgt. Bill Lisbon

Two Marines from Marine Air Control Squadron 1 search the banks of the Colorado River in northwest Yuma on Friday for clues to the whereabouts of Sgt. Jonathan Kyle Ferguson, a MACS-1 Marine who has been missing since Feb. 14. More than 80 Marines joined local law enforcement personnel in the search.

NMCRS ... from page 1

drive, meaning that almost ten times more money was used than was raised.

The money NMCRS donates is slowly repaid throughout the year through various payment options, giving them funds needed for the following year. Thus, the less money that is repaid the less money will be available.

“We don’t receive any government funding,” said O’Hara. “Every year some of it doesn’t come back for various reasons. So you have to keep adding to it so that it can perpetuate itself.”

An advisory board meeting was held in preparation for the upcoming drive to provide information on the effectiveness of the relief programs and services to the senior leadership on station.

During the meeting, Lance Cpl. Noel Dejesus, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron assistant tax site coordinator, shared a story about his experience with the relief society during a personal time of need.

On March 23, 2010, Dejesus had surgery. Unexpectedly, six days later his

15-month-old son, Onyx, received an emergency tracheotomy and was later airlifted to a hospital in Tucson.

Dejesus and his wife immediately drove out to Tucson to be by their son’s side and stayed there for 40 days without financial aid from the Tricare system. Being unprepared for such an unforeseen crisis, they turned to the relief society for help.

“The relief society is there for you,” said Dejesus. “They not only helped me financially but they assisted me with fi-

nancial budgeting. They prepared me for the long haul ahead.”

Since the incident, the family has had to return to Tucson six times, staying two to four weeks at a time in a Ronald McDonald house. The house is a service provided by fast food restaurant, McDonalds, for families who must stay out of their homes while their child is going through medical treatment.

Approximately four families last year had similar problems as Dejesus. Tricare doesn’t cover transportation food and

lodging in emergencies. His story not only pointed out the glitch in the Tricare system, but showed how NMCRS can help Marines in great times of need.

“Someone needs to know that this is going on,” said Dejesus. “I’m sure there are other families on this base that are going through the same thing. People should know that the Navy Marine Corps Relief Society is a great service to the community. They kept me above water.”

NMCRS is located in building 460 and can be reached at 928-269-2373.

AVENGERS ... from page 1

my men will get the job done.”

An unusual number of Marines within the detachment have never deployed, which caused a small concern amongst the command while preparing.

“When we first realized that a large amount of our Marines had no deployment experience, we were skeptical as to how smoothly our operations would go,” said Gunnery Sgt. James Grace, VMA-211 avionics technician. “However, once workups started up and their training progressed, we were very confident in their skills. I don’t believe we will run into any problems in the future, and I look forward to seeing these Marines show their stuff on the deployment.”

The squadron began preparing for the deployment in October 2010. Training included standard ground preparation and on-ship training aboard the Boxer, as well as the station’s Auxiliary Airfield 2, which simulates the deck of a ship, offering pilots an area to practice their landings and gain required training hours.

Throughout that time many of the inexperienced Marines got a chance to preview what their lives will be like aboard the Boxer.

“Working on a ship was a new experience,” said Cpl. Renard Williams, VMA-211 airframes mechanic. “We learned a lot about what it takes to live on a ship and how our jobs are going to be at sea. I know this is going to be a good experience because we will have the opportunity to experience new cultures along the way.”

The rest of the squadron is currently deployed with the 31st MEU and is slated to return in early June.